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Concert: Ithaca College Wind Ensemble

Grant Cooper

Louis Menchaca

Ithaca College Wind Ensemble

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ITHACA COLLEGE WIND ENSEMBLE

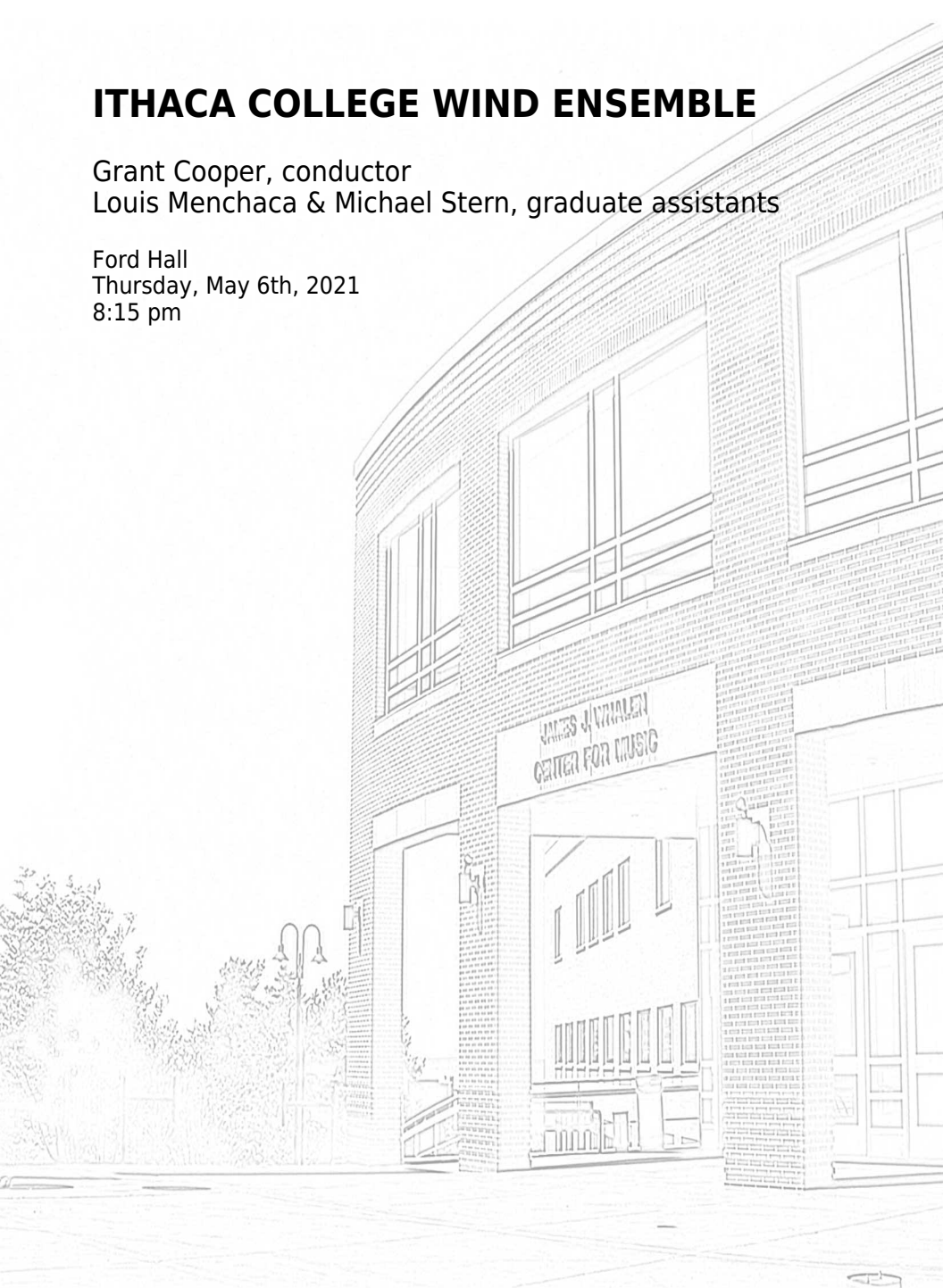
Grant Cooper, conductor

Louis Menchaca & Michael Stern, graduate assistants

Ford Hall

Thursday, May 6th, 2021

8:15 pm



ITHACA COLLEGE

School of Music

Program

"Marcha Provinciana" from *Chapultepec*

Carlos Chávez
(1899-1978)

New England Triptych

I. Be Glad Then, America
II. When Jesus Wept
III. Chester

William Schuman
(1910-1992)

Circus Polka

(Composed for a Young Elephant)

Igor Stravinsky
(1882-1971)
orch. David Raskin

March Militaire

Franz Schubert
(1797-1828)
arr. L.C. Harnsberger

Circus Polka (Reprise)

Igor Stravinsky

Intermission

Tight Squeeze

Alex Shapiro
(b. 1962)

American Guernica

Adolphus Hailstork
(b. 1941)

Louis Menchaca, conductor

Marching Song of Democracy

Percy Aldridge Grainger
(1882-1961)

Three Marches

Kansas Wildcats
The Black Horse Troop
Glory of the Yankee Navy

John Philip Sousa
(1854-1932)
ed. Keith Brion / Grant Cooper

Program Notes

Carlos Chávez is widely considered to be the most important Mexican composer of the 20th century. Throughout his life, he was an influential teacher to other prominent Mexican composers (including the members of "Los Cuatro"), a conductor of many orchestras across North America, a writer whose essays commented on music's role in modern society, and a Mexican government official who oversaw state-sponsored artistic endeavors.

Chapultepec originated as a single-movement work for orchestra entitled *Obertura Republicana* ("Republican Overture"), containing several popular songs of Mexico that Chávez reharmonized and orchestrated for the concert hall. Showcasing a sense of nationalism that underpins much of his output, the composer chose songs that were particularly popular at the time of the Mexican Revolution beginning in 1910. Simultaneously, the piece also illustrates another hallmark of Chávez's musical idiom: synthesizing styles of indigenous Mexican folk music and the Western-European conventions that continually influenced it after the initial Spanish conquest of Mexico in the early 1500s. The *Obertura Republicana* was premiered by the Orquesta Sinfónica de México in 1935 with the composer conducting. Shortly after the original orchestral premiere, Chávez rescored the piece for wind band, casting the music into a trio of short, distinct movements that each feature one of the cultural tunes he used as source material. When this version for winds was eventually published in 1963, Chávez retitled the piece as *Chapultepec: Three Famous Mexican Pieces*, and it is under this title that both the band and orchestra versions of the music are more-widely known today. The first of the band suite's three movements, "**Marcha Provinciana**," is largely drawn from Gernaro Codina's "Marcha Zacatecas," the unofficial Mexican national anthem.

A New York City native, **William Schuman** was both a prominent 20th century composer and arts administrator, eventually leading both the Julliard School and Lincoln Center. Although originally conceived of as a suite for orchestra (and a popular one, at that), his ***New England Triptych*** has found even greater success as three musical settings for wind band. Schuman rescored the middle movement, *When Jesus Wept*, soon after the publication of the orchestral version in 1956, reflecting its extreme similarity to the original score. However, the original version of *Chester* in the orchestra suite was significantly shorter than the piece you will hear tonight. Schuman greatly expanded the scope of the music and scored it for band at the request of the Alpha Chapter of the national band fraternity Pi Kappa Omicron. Interestingly, the wind setting of *Be Glad Then, America*, came much later than the other two movements. Schuman was quite hesitant to transcribe the piece for wind band; however, after many requests for the composer to transcribe the piece for winds, along with several attempts by third-party arrangers that Schuman rejected, he finally published the first movement version for winds in 1975. Schuman describes both his affinity for Billings' music, as well as his attempt to faithfully recreate Billings' tunes through the filter of his own compositional style, in the program note to the original orchestral score:

"William Billings (1746-1800) is a major figure in the history of American

music. The works of this dynamic composer capture the spirit of sinewy ruggedness, deep religiosity and patriotic fervor that we associate with the Revolutionary period. Despite the undeniable crudities and technical shortcomings of his music, its appeal, even today, is forceful and moving. I am not alone among American composers who feel an identity with Billings and it is this sense of identity which accounts for my use of his music as a point of departure. These pieces do not constitute a 'fantasy' on themes of Billings, nor 'variations' on his themes, but rather a fusion of styles and musical language."

Just as Pablo Picasso was to 20th-century art and Martha Graham was to 20th-century dance, many argue that the most influential figure in 20th-century music was **Igor Stravinsky**. While he created a large catalog of epoch-defining music, among his lesser-known works is the ***Circus Polka***, which has a very interesting history. Born of a commission by the Ringling Brothers Circus, he composed the piece for a ballet number that featured dancing performed by 50 elephants. After completing a version of the music for two pianos, Stravinsky was informed of the instrumentation for the Ringling Brothers' band and decided to enlist the help of composers more familiar with contemporary wind orchestration. He first contacted the popular American composer Robert Russell Bennett, but - already busy working on a Broadway project - Bennett declined and referred Stravinsky to a younger colleague, David Raskin. Raskin spent a week in Los Angeles with Stravinsky completing the piece, orchestrating several pages a day and then consulting the famous Russian for his approval. Although Stravinsky rescored the piece for orchestra only two years later in 1944, Raskin's setting for band under Stravinsky's supervision is the version heard this evening, just as it was heard accompanying elephants in 1942. Stravinsky's music is often tongue-in-cheek, featuring disjunct circus-like melodies full of leaps and rhythmic displacements that constantly knock the listener off kilter. He even makes a mockery of this the supposed pompous style of ballet music by quoting **Franz Schubert's *March Militaire No. 1*** and adding to it dissonant harmonies and brash, emphatic articulations. Stravinsky denied that Schubert's piece influenced him in any way while composing *Circus Polka*, but as you'll hear tonight, the similarities between the two pieces are much too striking to be mere coincidence.

Alex Shapiro (b. New York City, 1962) aligns note after note with the hope that at least a few of them will actually sound good next to each other. Her persistence at this activity, as well as non-fiction music writing, public speaking, arts advocacy volunteerism, wildlife photography, and the shameless instigation of insufferable puns on Facebook, has led to a happy life. Drawing from a broad musical palette that giddily ignores genre, Alex's acoustic and electroacoustic works are published by Activist Music LLC, performed and broadcast daily, and can be found on over thirty commercial releases from record labels around the world. Alex lives on Washington State's remote San Juan Island, and when she's not composing she can be found communing with nature, as seen on her music and photo-filled blog, www.notesfromthekelp.com and her website, www.alexshapiro.org.

Tight Squeeze might best be described by the following suggestion: imagine Arnold Schoenberg, Henry Mancini, and Charlie Parker walking into a techno rave dance club in Havana. And, staying for at least three minutes.

On the heels of composing *Paper Cut* which pairs a wind band with not only an electronic track, but a ream of printer paper, I knew I wanted to create another, even more uptempo, groove-oriented piece that would be fun for fidgety teenagers with the attention spans of diabetic gnats. Okay, even fun for calmer musicians. Unexpectedly, that turned out to feature a twelve-tone row theme -- possibly the world's first for high school band, at least this far west of Vienna. Initially the melody only had eight notes. When I noticed that none repeated themselves, I decided to go for broke, in a tip of the hat to my beloved 90-year old German composition teacher Ursula Mamlok, who was a renowned serialist during the earlier years of her career. The only serialism I've ever been interested in is granola, but I had a good time with this little tone row, which I paired with a techno-rock-infused percussion groove and electric bass line (yeah, I know, Schoenberg did that first), plus a few Latin rhythms and a hint of jazz. Voila: Electroacoustic Twelve-tone Techno Latin Bebop.

The twelve pitches are first introduced in all their chromatic glory at bars 7-10, and they reappear in different keys throughout the piece. The music, however, is not really in any key at all, since I only think in terms of keys if I'm locked out of my car. And if I were locked out of my car, this is probably the kind of thing I'd be hearing in my head while frantically trying to get back in.

Which leads to the title, which has nothing to do with my car. It has everything to do with a young gull who landed on a rock in front of my desk window as I was finishing this music, with a sizable flounder uh, floundering in his clamped beak (as seen on this cover, and on the TIGHT SQUEEZE page of my website). The rather goofy-looking bird was having a challenging time figuring out how to swallow his windfall. Looking up from my work for a moment, I said to the bird, "Wow, tight squeeze!", and immediately realized that all these notes that were cramming the score page would soon be squeezing through the students' instruments, as snugly as a fat flounder in a gull's mouth. I also realized that talking to birds is pointless; they make lousy conversationalists.

— *Biography and program note by the composer*

Adolphus Hailstork's compositions reflect his love for music that sings, which he attributes to his participation in choirs and his study of singing and conducting as a teenager. He first studied composition in college at the age of fifteen with Mark Fax at Howard University in Washington D.C., where he graduated magna cum laude, and later earned two degrees from the Manhattan School of Music under the tutelage of Vittorio Giannini and David Diamond. Further composition studies included study in Paris at the American Institute with composer Nadia Boulanger, at Dartmouth College for electronic music with composers John Appleton and Herbert Howe, and a doctorate in composition from Michigan State University, where he studied with H. Owen Reed. Deeply impacted by the death of Dr. Martin Luther King during the

composer's years in college, Hailstork felt it was his responsibility to contribute to the lineage of black arts in America. As a result, his musical interests have always been to fuse African American melodic and rhythmic materials with European structural principles, to create music that would be universal and transcend cultural boundaries.

American Guernica was inspired by the 1963 fire bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama. Particularly heinous among the many atrocities committed against Black Americans throughout the 20th century, the bombing injured twenty-two members of the congregation and killed four child-members of the church's choir: Carol Robertson, 14; Addie Mae Collins, 14; Cynthia Wesley, 14; and Denise McNair, 11. Hailstork indicates in his manuscript that the piece is dedicated in memory of these four girls. Just like Picasso's famous tableau, *Guernica*, (to which the music's title is an allusion), Hailstork's score juxtaposes various elements that convey the horror of the event that inspired the work. The first half of the piece is filled with aural depictions of utter chaos and destruction, representing the bomb's explosion and its immediate aftermath. In addition, a solo piano provides gospel-inspired interludes that simultaneously represent greiving the loss of life and hope for the ability to carry onward. The second half of the piece is largely comprised of music suggesting a slow funeral procession, perhaps attempting to provide the church's congregation with whatever small sense of possible closure might be after the senseless hate-crime.

— *biographical information from the American Composers Forum*

Percy Grainger was inspired to write his ***Marching Song of Democracy*** while attending the Paris exhibition of 1900. He first conceived his *Marching Song* in a setting far different from standard instrumental ensembles, as the composer describes in notes included in the orchestral version of the score:

"My original plan was to write my *Marching Song of Democracy* for voices and whistlers only (no instruments), and have it performed by a chorus of men, women, and children singing and whistling to the rhythmic accompaniment of their tramping feet as they marched along in the open air. But a later realization of the need for instrumental color (inherent in the character of the music from the first) ultimately led me to score it for the concert-hall. An athletic, out-of-door spirit must, however, be understood to be behind the piece from start to finish."

He began the band score on July 4, 1948, and completed it later that month while on vacation at his sister-in-law's home in Segeltorp, Sweden. Grainger's *Marching Song* is a sprawling tone poem which encapsulates the post-romantic expressive qualities of Wagner, R. Strauss, Mahler, and Bruckner. But the music is infused with Grainger's own original compositional techniques and humanistic spirit.

— *program note by Keith Brion*

John Philip Sousa, famous American bandmaster and popular composer,

was appointed leader of the US Marine band in 1880. After a successful tenure, he left the Marines in 1892 to organize an incredibly successful band of his own, performing throughout the US and eventually touring the world in 1910-11. Tonight, you will hear three different marches by "The March King." **Kansas Wildcats** was written for the students and faculty of Kansas State University, who lobbied Sousa to write them a piece after his band performed in Manhattan, Kansas in 1928. **The Black Horse Troop** features a 6/8 meter lilt that presses ever forward combined with infectious woodwind melodies that are interspersed brass fanfares. **Glory of the Yankee Navy** finishes this particular set of marches, providing a lovely flourish of woodwind lines in a catchy "two-step" dance form, popular in Sousa's era.

— All program notes by Louis Menchaca unless otherwise indicated

Ithaca College Wind Ensemble

Piccolo

Amit
Rosenberg-Rappin*

Flute

Lila Weiser*%
Laurie Hall

Oboe

Raelene Ford*
Gretchen
Breitenbach

E-flat Clarinet

Caitlin Danserau*%

B-flat Clarinet

Jenna Beaudoin*%
Maria Vincelette%
Mark Jones%
Julie Kratz%

Bass Clarinet

Elizabeth
Ukstins*%

Bassoon

Bradley Johnson*
Nathaniel Finke

Alto Saxophone

Tim Coene*
Nikki Millmann%

Tenor

Saxophone
Brandon
Hildebrant*

Baritone

Saxophone
Stephanie Pond*%

Trumpet

Evan Schreiber*%
Sydney Alfano%
Marita Harris%
Elise Hoerbelt%
Marie Plouffe%
Greta Shawver%

Horn

Owen Lundeen*%
Victoria Postler%
Evie Morse

Trombone

Carolyn
FitzGerald*%
Wyatt Weldum%

Bass Trombone

Lea LaChance*%

Euphonium

Elizabeth Rutan*%

Tuba

Joel
Spiridigliozzi*%
Jon Aldave

Double Bass

Jasmine
Rodriguez*%

Piano/Celesta

Angelique Scully

Percussion

Patrick Roche*
Brian Breen%
Ian Lisi%
Greg Savino

* *Principal player*
% *Stravinsky*
personnel

Grant Cooper

Grant Cooper currently serves as Director of Instrumental Ensembles at Ithaca College. Born in New Zealand as the son of a professional opera singer, he sang and acted in his first opera at age four and studied piano and music theory prior to college.

After completing his degree in pure mathematics at the University of Auckland, Cooper traveled to the United States for further studies in music. His initial opportunities as a conductor grew from his colleagues' invitations to lead them in larger chamber ensemble performances. Since then, his many guest conducting engagements have included the Houston Symphony, Jacksonville Symphony, The Florida Orchestra, Pasadena Symphony, New Mexico Philharmonic, Buffalo Philharmonic, Rochester Philharmonic, Chautauqua Symphony Orchestra, Auckland Philharmonia, and Syracuse Opera, among many others. Recently, he has made successful debut appearances with the Kennedy Center Orchestra, the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, and the Malaysian Philharmonic.

Cooper has just completed 17 seasons as artistic director and conductor of the West Virginia Symphony Orchestra. Prior to this, Cooper served as resident conductor of the Syracuse Symphony Orchestra for 10 seasons. He currently serves as artistic director of the annual Bach & Beyond festival in Fredonia, New York and as a resident conductor at the Eastern Music Festival.

A commissioned composer, Cooper's concert works include *A Song of Longing, Though...*, for soprano and orchestra and a ballet, *On the Appalachian Trail*, which was premiered in 2010 at Chautauqua. His original film scores for two Charlie Chaplin movies have been performed around the world and he recently composed a chamber work on commission from the Kennedy Center in Washington DC. Cooper is especially passionate about creating works designed to introduce young audiences to the orchestra and has created a substantial body of works for this purpose.

Cooper has recorded for Delos International, Atoll, Ode, Mark, and Kiwi Pacific recordings, and has the unique distinction of having CD recordings of himself as conductor, performer, and composer, all currently available in the catalog.

Cooper's dedication to serving the West Virginia arts community was recognized in the spring of 2012 with his receiving the Governor's Award for Distinguished Service in the Arts. Fairmont State University conferred a Doctor of Letters degree in 2017 in recognition of Cooper's dedication to the education of listeners of all ages.

Cooper previously served as Professor of Music at Ithaca College from 1993 - 2003.